

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF CERTAIN RELATIONSHIPS
BETWEEN DEBATERS' ATTITUDES
AND WIN-LOSS RECORDS

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of a debater's attitude towards a debate topic on his effectiveness in debating the topic and the effects of his tournament debating of that topic on his attitudes toward the topic.

Background of the Study

Any study of the importance of a debaters' attitude towards the question he is debating is rooted in the controversy over two-sided debating. The common practice in the early years of competitive debate usually involved two colleges contracting to hold a public debate on a designated topic. Each school was assigned a given side to defend and two debaters from each school were selected to uphold the assigned position. Debate practice and procedure has changed considerably since these early years. Today complicated tournaments are held involving many schools entering several teams each to participate in a series of from four to eight debates, alternating from one side of the topic to the other without regard to the speaker's real convictions. The presence of an audience in a contemporary debate tournament is extremely rare. These changes in debate procedure have stimulated the controversy over the wisdom of two-sided debating during the past half-century.

Senator Albert J. Beveridge has charged that "the practice in high schools and colleges of appointing debate teams to support or oppose propositions, regardless of what the debaters believe, is questionable--indeed, bad."¹

Richard Murphy claims that "Debate would be in a stronger position if it were freed from the anachronistic practice of multiple positions. And those who believe in the essential processes of democratic debate and wish to extend them, would no longer be held liable for a dubious practice, if the debate-both-sides policy were abandoned."²

Those writers, such as Beveridge and Murphy, who oppose the practice of permitting, or requiring, high school and college students to debate both sides of a resolution have raised the following three questions: (1) Is it ethical for a debater to argue both sides of a proposition? (2) Is two-sided debate essential to the tournament debate situation? (3) Is two-sided debate necessary to teach objectivity and tolerance?

Two-Sided Debate--Ethics

The controversy over the ethics of two-sided debating appears to have been generated from Theodore Roosevelt's statement in his 1913 Autobiography that he was "exceedingly glad" that as a student at Harvard he had never "practiced

¹ The Art of Public Speaking (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924) pp. 23-24.

² "The Ethics of Debating Both Sides," The Speech Teacher, VI, No. 1, January 1957, p. 9.

debating." He said he had "not the slightest sympathy with debating contests in which each side is arbitrarily assigned a given proposition and told to maintain it without the least reference to whether those maintaining it believed in it or not."³ It might be interesting to note that the man who defeated Roosevelt for the Presidency in 1912 was also aware of this controversy, for, as Dayton D. McKean reports, "Woodrow Wilson as a senior in college refused to participate in a prize debate when drawing lots put him on the side opposite his belief. But as a debate counsellor at Princeton, he once advised a debater not to worry about opposing his own conviction, but to center on his opposition to Harvard."⁴ "He (Wilson) was very insistent, says the Reverend R. F. Stirling, that we read, think, write, and debate on both sides."⁵ Wilson seemed to agree with Roosevelt as a student that debating against conviction was ethically or morally wrong, but as a teacher he apparently believed that there were educational values in two-sided debating. Theodore Roosevelt's uncompromising position was explained when he said, "What we need is to turn out of our colleges men with ardent convictions on the side of the right, not young men who can make a good argument for either right or wrong as their

³ An Autobiography (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913), p. 26.

⁴ Dayton D. McKean, "Woodrow Wilson as a debate coach." The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XVI, (November, 1930), p. 460.

⁵ McKean., p. 459.

interest bids them."⁶ Roosevelt and Wilson did not resolve the issue of two-sided debating, they merely identified the problem and clarified the issues at stake. During the half-century following these statesmen, the argument has become even more hotly contested.

One of the conditions responsible for the increased interest in the controversy over the ethics of debating both sides has been the changes within the debate program. Murphy identified the most fundamental of these changes when he reported that

. . . with the firm establishment of the tournament system, which received its greatest impetus in the thirties, there has been a growing tendency not only to ignore conviction and side, but also to incorporate debating both sides as a part of the structure. For example, the West Point National Invitational Tournament requires that 'Teams debate opposite sides of the question an equal number of times.' Whereas in the older systems policy was largely a matter of individual schools and coaches, now one either debates both sides or he does not debate at all, or at least not in tournaments such as the West Point. An ethic has now been imposed.⁷

Nearly all high school debate tournaments in Kansas, with the exception of the District and State Debate Tournaments sponsored by the Kansas State High School Activities Association and a small number of invitational tournaments designed to prepare teams for the District and State contests, require students to debate both sides of the topic. Two-sided debating is also the nearly universal practice of Mid-Western intercollegiate debate tournaments.

⁶ Roosevelt, p. 20.

⁷ Murphy, p. 2.

This element of compulsion, of forcing a student to debate against his convictions seems to be the most objectionable characteristic of modern debate to the opponents of two-sided debate. If debate is to be considered the art of public speaking, or as persuasion, then it is subject to ethical judgment. Murphy contends that "modern debate is not dialectical; it is rhetorical; it appeals for judgment, for acceptance. And audiences, even if sparse at times, are present."⁸ By using this rationale, Murphy claims that "The argument against debating both sides is very simple and consistent. Debate, the argument goes, is a form of public speaking. A public statement is a public commitment."⁹ Beveridge phrased this argument in the strongest possible language when he stated that public speaking, " . . . means of course, utter sincerity. Never under any circumstances or for any reward tell an audience what you, yourself, do not believe or are even indifferent about. To do so is immoral and worse--it is to be a public liar."¹⁰ Karl R. Wallace cautioned against this problem when he suggested that " . . . the worst evil which follows from an indifference to means is that we make easy the intent of the dishonest, insincere speaker. It is easy to assert high-sounding purposes; it is difficult for the listener to assess the sincerity of these assertions.

⁸ Murphy, p. 256.

⁹ Murphy, p. 2.

¹⁰ Beveridge, p. 23-24.

In short, as Mahatma Gandhi often told us, 'Evil means, even for a good end, produce evil results.'¹¹ The harshness of the statements of Beveridge and Wallace must be interpreted in their proper context. They were referring to public speaking in general; not debate in particular. The opponents of two-sided debate level these charges at debate in particular on the grounds that debate is more than an artificial teaching device which bears no relationship to real life situations, but that debate is public speaking and is therefore subject to the ethical standards of public advocacy or persuasion, which will not tolerate insincerity, inconsistency, or conflict of interests. Wallace contends that the communicator must always ask himself this question, "Can I freely admit the force of opposing evidence and argument and still advocate a position which represents my convictions?"¹² An even greater responsibility was implied by Murphy when he claimed that "to argue in contemporary times that a public speaker who has read and discussed his question shall not bring to the deliberation any personal conviction, but shall leave it to an audience which may never have heard the matter deliberated before, is to resign the moral responsibility of the speaker!"¹³ Wallace warns that "Communication is in danger of being regarded as merely an art of personal success and prestige and

¹¹ Wallace, p. 3.

¹² Wallace, p. 9.

¹³ Murphy, p. 4.

of being forgotten as the indispensable art of social persuasion."¹⁴

Brooks Quimby, one of the strongest opponents of the debate-both-sides policy, has summed up his position and the position of his fellow critics in this statement: "Our democracy needs men and women of principle, who will weigh the arguments before they become advocates, rather than men and women trained to take either side at the flip of a coin."¹⁵

Those writers, such as Thompson, Smith, Cripe, McBurney, and Auer, who defend debating both sides of a debate topic strongly deny the charge of unethical conduct. Not only do they defend the ethics of two-sided debate, they praise the practice as an exceptionally fine teaching device. Since, as Murphy has pointed out, "there has been a growing tendency . . . to incorporate debating both sides as a part of the tournament structure" one must conclude that most coaches of debate are more interested in universalizing the practice than of discontinuing it.

Nicholas Cripe, in his article, "Debating both sides in tournaments is ethical," defended the educational values of two-sided debate when he reported that

His [the tournament debater's] purpose, is to convince the judges that he and his partner are the better debaters. (This should not be construed to mean that the purpose of any school debate program is only the winning of debates. It is merely that winning debates is just one of the best methods yet

¹⁴ Wallace, p. 2.

¹⁵ "But is it Educational?", Speech Activities, IX, (Summer, 1953), p. 20.

devised of to get busy students to do the research of material, the analysis, the mastering of the modes of reasoning, and the principles of refutation, the delivery necessary to make them into effective, intelligent, and responsible debaters.)¹⁶

One of the strongest arguments against the ethics of debating both sides was that it developed dishonest or hypocritical traits in debaters. Wayne Thompson answered this charge in this manner:

Debating both sides of a proposition is neither morally wrong nor hypocritical. Some writers have charged that debating both sides results in various evils, such as insincerity, shallowness, and the presentation of arguments known to be poorly founded or fallacious. These malpractices which also occur among speakers who debate only one side are the result of other causes--weaknesses in the character of the offender or a misunderstanding of the proper function of debate.¹⁷

McBurney, O'Neill, and Mills, writing to the same point, relate that

Once a cause has been undertaken, the advocate has a responsibility to present the best possible case for his proposition within the limits of the facts as he knows them or believes them to be. He should not deliberately do less nor does he have any moral right to attempt more. No man has a moral right to lie, cheat, or intentionally distort, much less a responsibility to do so¹⁸

O'Neill, Laycock, and Scales, speaking directly to the subject of a students debating both sides did not seem to be

¹⁶ The Speech Teacher, VI, (September, 1957), p. 211.

¹⁷ Wayne D. Thompson, "Discussion and Debate: A Re-examination," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXX, (October, 1944), pp. 288-299.

¹⁸ James H. McBurney, James M. O'Neill, and Glen E. Mills, Argumentation and Debate: Techniques of a Free Society, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 4.

concerned about ethical hazards when they said " . . . it would not undermine his moral character if he did [debate against his conviction.] "19 Ewbank and Auer expressed the same opinion when they stated that "Even if debaters are assigned to the side of the question in which they do not believe, it does not necessarily follow that the experience is harmful"20 The authorities cited have clearly stated that debating both sides of a debate topic does not violate moral or ethical standards.

One of the most fundamental arguments used by those authorities who contend that debating against conviction does not violate acceptable ethical standards is that debate is not public advocacy in the same manner that a legislator, lawyer, or salesman use persuasion. They claim that it is an effective pedagogical device for the teaching techniques of persuasion. Thompson illustrated the point that

Debating is not properly a form of persuasion The thesis that debate is a form of persuasion rests upon the premise that ideas should be imposed upon the public, whereas the thesis that debate should be a form of investigation and testing a proposed solution rests upon the premise that both sides should be presented and that the listeners should make the decision.21

Cripe argued along the same line when he wrote that

19 James Milton O'Neill, Craven Laycock, and Robert Leighton Scales, Argumentation and Debate, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1917), p. 376.

20 Henry L. Ewbank and J. Jeffrey Auer, Discussion and Debate: Tools of a Democracy, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1951), p. 405.

21 Thompson, p. 288.

The basic error in reasoning of those who condemn speaking on both sides in school debate tournaments is their failure to make a distinction between tournament debating and other forms of public argumentative speaking. It is my contention that interscholastic debating is a different form of public speaking from debate that we hear the legislator or the lawyer use.²²

McBurney, O'Neill, and Mills warned debaters not to make the mistake of confusing contest debate with public debate when they suggested that "the student should keep in mind the differences between actual life situations, such as legislature, court, or campaign, and the situation in school or contest debates."²³

The advocates of two-sided debating, then, led by authorities such as Thompson, Cripe, Ewbank, Auer, and McBurney, argue that debate is a useful tool in teaching persuasion, but that it is not persuasion in the sense that support for a cause is sought. They reason that the judge is present to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the debaters', not the merits of the question. The advocates of two-sided debating claim that debaters develop greater open-mindedness and objectivity by debating both sides than they could receive by debating only one side.

Two-Sided Debate--Essential

Related to the question of whether debating both sides of a proposition is beneficial or harmful to the

²² Cripe, p. 210

²³ McBurney, et. al., p. 4

student of debate and to the public image of debate is the practical question of whether the present system of tournament debate contests on a single national topic could exist without requiring a debater to alternate sides. If it were true that tournament debating could not function efficiently without two-sided debating, then two-sided debating might be justified as a "necessary evil". If debating both sides of a resolution is not essential to the tournament system then one must conclude that the existence of the practice is one of choice, namely, that the directors of debate in the United States prefer two-sided debating for its intrinsic values.

Murphy argued that two-sided debating is not essential to tournament situations when he asserted that ". . . the both-sides methodology is not now and never has been an essential element in debate To believe that to debate one must debate both sides is to ignore what actual practice is."²⁴ "Since debate questions are purposely framed to provide a division of opinion, there should be available speakers on either side of the matter, speakers who really believe their own arguments,"²⁵ Murphy concluded. This argument might be valid if debaters were equally divided by conviction of the specific affirmative or negative sides involved. Nicholas Cripe attempted to refute this assumption

²⁴ Murphy, p. 8.

²⁵ Murphy, p. 3.

by alleging that " . . . a great many schools could not debate unless some means could be found so that the few ethical affirmative or negative teams in the country would not be overworked."²⁶ Mr. Cripe suggested that it frequently happens that an entire debate squad may favor one side of a question. He continued his argument by citing these two examples:

For instance, the University of Vermont could not have had a debate team in 1950 when it won the West Point Tournament if the Murphy suggestion of debating only the side believed to be right had been followed Likewise, Grinnell College would have been unable to have a team in 1953²⁷

Even though it must be admitted that debate has in the past and could now operate without requiring students to debate both sides, it would certainly create sticky administrative and technical problems to overcome in achieving the simplicity and efficiency of the present system.

Another school of thought relating to the importance of two-sided debating in the classroom as well as in the tournament situation justifies the practice of alternating sides on the grounds that it gives the debater valuable experience in preparing and delivering both affirmative and negative cases. The last three national high school debate topics were on the subjects of "federal aid to education", "free trade", and "socialized medicine". It does not seem too unlikely that a significant number of high school debaters

²⁶ Cripe, p. 210.

²⁷ Cripe, p. 210.

either favored or opposed all of these three topics. If this were the case and a high school debater were required to debate only his conviction, then a significant number of debaters might have never debated in competition one or the other side of a question. Since the tournament debate situation is expected to provide an intensive practical experience in preparing and delivering both the affirmative and negative cases, then two-sided debating seems essential to the system.

Two-Sided Debate--Objectivity

One of the most worthwhile ends of debate is to develop habits of open-mindedness, objectivity, and tolerance of other points of view. Thompson claimed that two-sided debate is educationally more sound than one-sided debate when he suggested that

Teaching students to investigate both sides of a position and to compare and contrast them before making a decision is more desirable educationally than teaching them how to convince others to accept their point of view Students who evaluate both sides are better equipped to solve their individual problems than those who are persuaders By debating both sides, he is more likely to realize that propositions are bilateral. It is those who fail to recognize this fact who become intolerant, dogmatic, and bigoted.²⁸

Theodore Bilski expressed a similar attitude when he said "Debating itself does not require a person to predetermine his stand on a proposition and then investigate the problem solely to 'bolster' his side of the argument. In fact,

²⁸ Thompson, pp. 294-296.

debating not only encourages but it demands an "open mind" in the investigation and analysis of a proposition.²⁹ Murphy attacked the heart of this argument by replying that you do not have to debate both sides to establish tolerance and objectivity, but you should "brief both sides." He claims that you can "study" opposing arguments without advocating them.³⁰ All of the authorities cited seemed to agree that debating both sides or debating one side but studying the other side developed open mindedness and objectivity.

The questions raised concerning the ethics, value, and utility of two-sided debating to contemporary debate procedure by writers in the field of speech are related to the question of the effects of tournament debating on a debater's attitude toward the topic he is debating. If the arguments made by the critics of two-sided debating about the importance of a speaker's commitment to his public statements are valid, then a debater's attitude should have some effect on his debating of a resolution. If the advocates of two-sided debating are correct in asserting that debating creates open-mindedness, then the act of debating both sides of a resolution should have some effect on a debater's attitude toward the topic under discussion.

²⁹ Theodore Bilski, "Directing the Debate Program", Teachers College Journal, No. 34, (December, 1962), p. 96.

³⁰ Murphy, p. 4.

Review of the Literature

A review of the literature in speech related fields revealed several studies which attempted to measure attitude, to determine if attitude shifted as a result of debating one or both sides of a proposition, and to explain the cause of these shifts in attitude.

Donald G. Hay experimented with an attitude scale developed by Dr. L. L. Thurstone, a psychologist at the University of Chicago. Hay administered this attitude test to a thirty-member debate audience immediately before and after hearing a public debate. He found that "This indicated an apparent shift from a less favorable attitude toward 'increasing the powers of the President as a permanent policy' to a slightly more favorable attitude after hearing the debate."³¹ Hay continued his report by warning that since the difference in the mean attitude scores was only about twice the probable error of the difference no meaningful conclusions should be drawn except for the need of further experimentation in this field.

Clayton H. Schug conducted a study to determine if possible, what effect one's debating on a given side of a debate proposition might have on one's attitude toward that proposition. In other words do debaters tend to become "more strongly in favor of," or "more strongly opposed to" the particular side of the proposition defended; or do they remain, by and large, unchanged in attitude?³²

³¹ "Debate and the Measurement of Attitudes," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXII, (February, 1936), pp. 62-66.

³² "A Study of attitude change toward debate propositions among high school and college debaters", Speech Teacher, III, (January, 1954), p. 15.

To measure the debaters' attitude, Schug administered the "Woodward Shift of Opinion Ballot" before and after the debate season to 225 debaters who debated only one side of nine different national high school and college debate topics.³³ Schug's investigation proved extremely productive in measuring the direction of attitude shifts as a result of debating one side of a topic. An analysis of Schug's data revealed that of those subjects who debated the affirmative; 45 per cent favored the proposition, 44 per cent were undecided, and 11 per cent opposed the proposition. Of those who debated the negative; 16 per cent favored the proposition, 27 per cent were undecided, and 57 per cent were opposed to the proposition.³⁴ The attitudes cited above were measured before the debate season. These findings would also seem to indicate that debaters, if given a choice, have a strong tendency to debate the side of the question which agrees with their convictions. Schug's data showed that 75 per cent of the debaters who favored the proposition debated the affirmative side of the topic while 83 per cent of the debaters who opposed the proposition debated the negative side.³⁵ Schug summarized his findings in the following conclusions:

1. There was a rather pronounced tendency for debaters generally to move to positions more favorable to the side upheld, although approximately one-fifth remained unchanged in attitude, while another one-fifth

³³ Schug, p. 16.

³⁴ Schug, p. 16.

³⁵ Schug, p. 16.

actually shifted to positions less favorable to their side of the question.

2. There was a considerably greater tendency for the negative debaters to shift to attitudes more favorable to their own side than for the affirmative to do so; also, the affirmative debaters moved more readily than did the negative toward positions less favorable to their particular side.
3. Although the data for this study covered a wide variety of debate topics over a period of several years, there was a definite tendency for the negative to outgain the affirmative for adherents among the debaters.³⁶

Robert B. Capel measured the affects of a season's debating on 213 high school debaters.³⁷ Of these, 44 per cent recorded significant attitude shifts. Debaters with strong affirmative or negative opinions at the beginning of the season were likely to hold moderate beliefs at its close. The 23 who debated on both sides of a question tended to move toward a more neutral position. This latter finding tends to substantiate the assumption that debating both sides induces neutrality in attitude. The study, however, does not give any indication of what shift, if any, occurred in those who had moderate opinions at the beginning of the season. No reference is made as to whether such debaters became more moderate or more extreme in their views. The findings reported by Schug and Capel appear at first glance to be in conflict. Schug found that when students debate one side of a question, and favor the side upheld, that they

³⁶ Schug, p. 19.

³⁷ See the unpubl. diss. (Wisconsin, 1941) by Robert B. Capel, "The Effectiveness of High School Debate in Providing Information and Influencing Attitudes.", p. 1.

tend to strengthen or reinforce their pre-season attitudes. Capel found that when a student debates on either one or both sides of a topic he weakens his pre-season attitude or moves toward neutrality. If we are to assume that both studies are reliable, then the explanation of the different conclusions might rest with the fact that one group debated both sides of the question. An examination of relevant literature may provide a clue to the answer of this difference.

Geraldine Welden conducted a study at the University of Pittsburg to compare the attitude shifts of students who debated one side of a proposition with students who debated both sides of a propositions.³⁸ To accomplish this purpose Welden designed her experiment in the following manner:

To determine any change of attitude, an attitude questionnaire was constructed and administered to college debaters at the beginning of a debate season and the identical questionnaire was administered six months later at the close of the debate season. For this purpose the Thurstone-Chave attitude measuring technique was employed. It was applied in measuring the attitudes of Pennsylvania College debaters on the 1955-56 national intercollegiate debate proposition "Resolved: that the non-agricultural industries of the United States should guarantee their employees an annual wage."³⁹

The population used by Welden in this study included 91 debaters. Of these 91 debaters, 24 debated only the affirmative, 26 debated only the negative, and 41 debated both sides of the proposition. The following conclusions were drawn from the data compiled:

³⁸ See the unpubl. thesis (Pittsburg, 1957) by Geraldine Seth Welden, "Shifts of Opinion of Selected Pennsylvania College Debaters on the 1955-56 National Topic as a Function of Debating one or both sides of the Proposition.", p. 1.

³⁹ Welden, p. 17.

In this study it appeared that debaters generally debated the side of the question they favored during the entire season. The majority of those who had no strong attitude to begin with debated both sides of the proposition before the season concluded. Once the groups had been determined as a result of the post testing it became apparent that the debaters in the three groups (affirmative, negative, both sides) were distinct from one another in attitudes both at the beginning of the season and at the end of the season. Further analysis revealed that the debaters in these groups did not shift significantly in attitude after a period of six months of debating the proposition on which they were measured.

If one basic conclusion could be drawn it would be as follows: those who debated the guaranteed annual wage for six months on only one side of the proposition did not become more favorable in attitude toward that side of the proposition; those who debated both sides of the proposition did not become more neutral in attitude as a result of debating both sides. In fact, those debaters who debated one side originally expressed themselves as favorable to the side upheld. Those who debated both sides of the proposition had no strong attitudes originally either way.⁴⁰

Welden's study does not seem to resolve or explain the Schug-Capel conflict, but it questions their findings. Hay found that when an audience hears a debate there is a tendency for the initial attitude of the audience to be weakened and to move toward congruity. Capel found basically the same thing to be true for debater's who debate one or both sides of a proposition, namely, that the initial attitude of the debater will be weakened and tend to move toward neutrality. Schug found that when a debater debates only one side of a proposition and his initial attitude favored that side his initial attitude is strengthened or reinforced. Welden discovered that debating one or both sides of a proposition

⁴⁰ Welden, p. 33.

had no significant effect on attitude. It seems painfully apparent at this point that, in general, debating one or both sides of a proposition either strengthens, weakens, or has no effect on a debaters attitude.

None of the four studies cited above provided an answer to the most fundamental question raised by the advocates and critics of two-sided debating which was; what are the effects of requiring a student to debate against his convictions. The critics of two-sided debating charge that this practice makes the debater shallow, insincere, and dishonest with himself and the audience. The advocates of debating reason that this practice develops critical thinking, objectivity, and open-mindedness.

Schug's study, which was the most comprehensive of the four, may shed some light on this question. Only Schug's report recorded data relating to those debaters who did debate against conviction.⁴¹ Eleven per cent of the affirmative debaters in Schug's study opposed the topic. Of these 11 per cent who opposed the topic; 46 per cent remained opposed in attitude, 23 per cent shifted to an undecided position, while 31 per cent shifted to a favorable affirmative position. In other words, 54 per cent of those affirmative debaters who originally opposed the topic shifted to a position more favorable to the topic. Also, 16 per cent of the negative debaters favored the topic (they debated

⁴¹ Schug, pp. 16-17.

against conviction). Of these 16 per cent who favored the topic; 24 per cent remained favorable to the topic, 12 per cent shifted to an undecided position, while 65 per cent shifted to an unfavorable position. In other words, 77 per cent of the negative debaters who originally favored the topic shifted to a less favorable position. The same condition was true of the debaters who were originally undecided about the topic. Forty-four per cent of the affirmative debaters were originally undecided about the topic. Of these 44 per cent who were undecided; 62 per cent shifted to a favorable affirmative position, 18 per cent shifted to an unfavorable affirmative position, while only 20 per cent remained undecided about the topic. In other words, 80 per cent of the affirmative debaters who were originally undecided shifted to a position either favorable or unfavorable to the topic. Twenty-seven per cent of the negative debaters were originally undecided about the topic. Of these 27 per cent who were undecided, 83 per cent shifted to a negative position, 10 per cent shifted to an affirmative position, while only 7 per cent remained undecided about the topic. In other words, 93 per cent of the negative debaters who were originally undecided about the topic shifted to a position either favorable or unfavorable to the topic.⁴² When Schug's data was evaluated in this fashion an opportunity to measure the attitude shift

⁴² Schug, pp. 15-16.

of debaters who debated against conviction was discovered. Schug demonstrated dramatically that debaters who argue against conviction weaken their initial attitude toward the topic. In fact, two-thirds of the debaters who argued against conviction moved to a position more compatible with the side upheld. This conclusion, then, tends to support the findings of Hay and Capel, and to deny the conclusions drawn by Welden.

A review of the literature relating to studies attempting to determine the direction and degree of attitude shifts among debaters who debate one or both sides of a proposition has revealed the following findings: Capel discovered that debating one or both sides of a proposition weakened the debater's initial attitude causing him to move toward neutrality; Schug found that debating one side of a topic resulted in a shift of the debater's original attitude to one more compatible with the side upheld; Welden failed to discover any significant shift of opinion among debaters who debated one or both sides of a topic; and Utterback found that debate tended to strengthen original attitudes while discussion appeared to weaken or reverse initial opinions.⁴³

One of the most common observations in the studies cited previously was the finding that debaters, if given a choice, prefer to debate on the side of the question they favor. These studies also indicated that if two-sided debating was permitted, most debaters who were undecided about the topic

⁴³ William E. Utterback, "The Influence of Conference on Group Opinion," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, (1950), 36:3, pp. 365-370.

generally chose to debate both sides or were willing to debate the side which had the fewer adherents. This finding would seem to indicate that debaters in general place a high regard on conviction.

The importance of conviction and sincerity was shown in the controversy over two-sided debating. The critics of two-sided debating condemned the practice on the grounds that it was not conviction at stake, but the effectiveness of the debater in supporting an assigned point of view with evidence, argument, and effective delivery. The advocates of two-sided debating also felt that the advantages received (critical thinking, open-mindedness) more than compensated for the disadvantage of debating against conviction.

The writers in the field of speech theory, practice, and pedagogy believe that sincerity and conviction are essential to effective speaking. Professor E. C. Buehler of Kansas University stated in his textbook that "The surest and easiest way to sell others on something is to be sold on it yourself. The fires of enthusiasm are kindled from personal conviction and personal belief. I have seen speakers fail again and again as they labored painfully through their speeches, suddenly electrify their audiences when they hit upon a subject close to their hearts."⁴⁴ Alan H. Monroe said "Straight-forward sincerity is the best assurance of effective speaking."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ You and Your Speeches, (Lawrence: Allen Press, 1957) p.28.

⁴⁵ Principles and Types of Speeches, (3rd ed., New York: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1949), p. 56.

Both of these men who are highly respected as authorities on the teaching of effective speech principles rank sincerity and conviction as essential to effective public speaking. Brembeck and Howell also recognized the importance of sincerity and conviction, but felt the terms require a more comprehensive definition and explanation.

That most authorities advise the speaker to be sincere is evident, although what they mean by sincerity is not always clear. 'Dedication to a cause' and 'Profound intellectual conviction' are listed frequently as characteristics of the sincere speaker.

We can identify three orders of sincerity: primary sincerity, consisting of unreserved belief in the persuasive proposition; secondary sincerity, stemming from a conviction that securing acceptance of the persuasive proposition is socially desirable, regardless of the persuader's personal feelings toward the specific proposition; and tertiary sincerity, resting on the persuader's personal reward from the act of persuasion, but being disinterested in truth of the proposition and its social consequences.⁴⁶

While it is true that a high school or college debater might utilize primary, secondary, or tertiary sincerity, he is more likely to exhibit tertiary sincerity. The reason that a debater would demonstrate tertiary sincerity is that debates are not commonly judged on the debaters' ability to persuade the judge to accept his position, but on who did the "best job of debating." Brembeck and Howell continued their discussion of sincerity by providing insight into the factors involved in secondary and tertiary sincerity.

⁴⁶ Winston Lamont Brembeck and William Smiley Howell, Persuasion: A Means of Social Control, (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), pp. 254-255.

Two comments may be made concerning persuasive speaking that rests on secondary or tertiary sincerity. Rationalization is always involved, enabling the speaker to live comfortably with himself As the high correlation of belief and desire would lead us to expect, the persuasive speaker tends, over a period of time, to increase his belief in his central proposition. Writers on mass communication note the tendency of propagandists to believe their own propaganda. The paid advocate may develop a 'profound conviction'!

From the viewpoint of the audience, it may be difficult or impossible to discriminate among primary, secondary, and tertiary sincerity of the persuasive speaker.

From the viewpoint of the speaker, primary sincerity is to be preferred. If he is unskilled, he will be unable to say something he does not believe with conviction, while great confidence in his message may help him in overcoming deficiencies in rhetoric and delivery. But the skilled persuader can probably weave as durable a fabric of ethos with the coarse fibers of secondary or tertiary sincerity as he can with the finer thread of genuine faith in the action he advocates.⁴⁷

Three of the ideas contained in this selection from Brembeck and Howell support the findings of authorities previously cited in this report and one idea suggests an area of further investigation. The statement that propagandists tend to believe their own propaganda was supported by Schug's study which discovered that two-thirds of the debaters studied who debated against conviction shift their attitudes to positions more compatible with the side upheld. Wallace, Beveridge, and Murphy condemned debating against conviction as dishonest and unethical because the audience would be led to believe that the debater's pretended conviction was real. Brembeck and Howell explain that this occurs because the audience is not

⁴⁷ Brembeck and Howell, pp. 256-257.

able to distinguish between primary, secondary, and tertiary sincerity. Beuhler and Monroe implied that an inexperienced or ineffective speaker could not give an effective speech without primary sincerity. Brembeck and Howell suggest that while this is true for inexperienced speakers, it is not true of effective speakers. A fourth statement made by Brembeck and Howell suggests the operation of a phenomenon related to secondary and tertiary sincerity which has not been previously discussed. This was the statement that when one is required to uphold a position he does not subscribe to in order to achieve some expected reward that "Rationalization is always involved, enabling the speaker to live comfortably with himself" ⁴⁸

This phenomenon which Brembeck and Howell implied is called "cognitive dissonance" by Leon Festinger. While Charles E. Osgood, George J. Suci, and Perry H. Tannenbaum refer to this concept as the "theory of congruity."

Festinger, a psychologist at Stanford University, developed and refined the theory of cognitive dissonance with the aid of a Ford Foundation grant. By "cognition," Festinger means " . . . any knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, or about one's behavior." ⁴⁹ By "dissonance," Festinger means "inconsistency." An example of cognitive dissonance at work might be found in

⁴⁸ Brembeck and Howell, p. 256.

⁴⁹ A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company, 1957), pp. 2-3.

the recent government report on health and lung cancer. A habitual smoker who believes and behaves consistently with the notion that the benefits of smoking outweigh the disadvantages encountered dissonance when the government report linked lung cancer with smoking and presented powerful, convincing evidence to the fact that the risks involved in smoking greatly exceed any derived advantages. Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory would predict this behavior pattern for a person with this type of dissonance: first, "The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance," and second, "When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance."⁵⁰ In this case, the subject in the example would either quit smoking; rationalize his habit by finding new advantages; discount the accuracy and credibility of the report; or ignore the report and avoid any contact with information, particularly persuasive, relating to the hazards of smoking. Festinger explained this type of cognitive dissonance when he stated that "The basic background of the theory consists of the notion that the human organism tries to establish internal harmony, consistency, or congruity among his opinions, attitudes, knowledge, and values. That is, there is a drive toward consonance among cognitions."⁵¹

⁵⁰ Festinger, p. 3.

⁵¹ Festinger, p. 260.

Festinger continued by stating that several situations may indicate or imply the existence of cognitive dissonance.

1. Dissonance almost always exists after a decision has been made between two or more alternatives.
2. Dissonance almost always exists after an attempt has been made, by offering rewards or threatening punishment, to elicit overt behavior that is at variance with private opinion.
3. Forced or accidental exposure to new information may create cognitive elements that are dissonant with existing cognition.
4. The open expression of disagreement in a group leads to the existence of cognitive dissonance in the members.
5. Identical dissonance in a large number of people may be created when an event occurs which is so compelling as to produce a uniform reaction in everyone.⁵²

The high school debate student would be expected to encounter most of these types of dissonance; therefore, the theory of cognitive dissonance might help to explain his attitude shift as a result of debating one or both sides of a proposition. Since a debater required to support both sides of a proposition can not avoid cognitive dissonance he will be under pressure to reduce this dissonance. Festinger states that "The strength of the pressure to reduce dissonance is a function of the magnitude of the existing dissonance."⁵³

There are several things a debater could do to reduce dissonance: (1) The debater could change his opinion to one more congruous to two-sided debating--neutrality; (2) seek additional information to bolster his own opinion; (3) subconsciously

⁵² Festinger, pp. 261-262.

⁵³ Festinger, p. 263.

misinterpret or misconceive alien information; (4) reject the opinion of those who disagree; (5) reorganize the importance of other cognitive elements--that is saying "winning debates and becoming a good speaker are really more important than my personal opinion"; or (6) if the dissonance is too great, he may refuse to debate against conviction or quit debating entirely, in which case his original opinion would be strengthened. Festinger does warn, however, that individuals have different levels of tolerance for dissonance and that the pressure to reduce dissonance may vary accordingly.⁵⁴ Even though tolerance levels are not uniform, a principle may be stated which will control tolerance levels for all individuals. "The maximum dissonance which can exist between two elements is equal to the resistance to change of the less resistant of the two elements. If the dissonance exceeds this magnitude, the less resistant cognitive element will be changed, thus reducing the dissonance."⁵⁵ The theory of cognitive dissonance, then, provides an insight into why a debater's attitude does or does not change as a result of debating, and makes possible the prediction of the direction and degree of this change in attitude.

Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum discovered the "principle of congruity" in their study of the "semantic differential."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Festinger, pp. 266-271.

⁵⁵ Festinger, p. 266.

⁵⁶ Charles E. Osgood, George J. Suci, and Percy H. Tannenbaum, The Measurement of Meaning, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1957), pp. 189-216.

The principle of congruity was summarized as follows:

The congruity principle appears to be a very general process operating whenever cognitive events interact. These interactions are such that the representational processes characteristic of related signs are modified toward congruity with each other, degree of modification being inversely proportional to the original intensities of the processes in isolation.⁵⁷

Successful results were obtained at the University of Illinois by these three men in predicting attitude change. Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum reported that " . . . the principle of congruity yields reasonably accurate predictions. Methodologically it should be emphasized that it is the use of the semantic differential as a generalized attitude scale that makes it possible to test this principle."⁵⁸

Since the most common method of testing the principle of congruity is through the use of the semantic differential, a brief review of this instrument would be pertinent to this study. "The semantic differential is essentially a combination of controlled association and scaling procedures."⁵⁹ Darnell describes the semantic differential (SD) as

. . . a means of eliciting subjects' responses that indicate which member of a pair of adjectives is more closely associated with a particular concept, and the intensity of that association. In its most common form, the SD form looks like this:

⁵⁷ Osgood, et al., p. 216.

⁵⁸ Osgood, et al., p. 212.

⁵⁹ Osgood, et al., p. 20.

TREE

good _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____ bad
 happy _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____ sad
 large _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____ small

The subject (S) is instructed to mark in the middle of the scale if the adjectives at either end are equally associated with the concept at the top of the page. If one is more closely associated than the other, S can indicate "extremely" (by marking the box next to the stronger associate), "quite" (by marking the second box from the stronger associate), or "slightly" (by marking the third box from the stronger associate--next to the center).

It is assumed that an adequate sample of such scales would provide a fairly specific profile of S's meaning for a concept.⁶⁰

By assigning the digits one through seven to each of the boxes and by using a number of scales an accurate statistical measure of a subject's attitude toward a concept can be identified on the multi-dimensional semantic differential. The semantic differential is extremely useful to the congruity principle in that it can measure statistically shifts of opinion between pre and post-tests.

An examination of the semantic differential form cited previously (TREE) reveals one problem which might emerge if the semantic differential were used indiscriminately. The adjectives "good-bad" and "large-small" would seem to describe a "tree" more accurately for most people than would "happy-sad". Darnell conducted a study to improve the method of selecting

⁶⁰ See the unpubl. diss. (Michigan State, 1964) by Donald Keith Darnell, "A Technique for Determining the Evaluative Discrimination Capacity and Polarity of Semantic Differential Scales for Specific Concepts", pp. 2-3.

highly discriminatory scales for use with the semantic differential.⁶¹ The method developed for this purpose was to test the scales independently by instructing the subjects to identify the "best imaginable" (B) and "worst imaginable" (W) example of the concept evaluated. This allows the subject to make an objective as well as an evaluative judgment about the concept. The subject in this case might interpret the "best imaginable" tree as "quite large" and the "worst imaginable" tree as "extremely small". If the majority of subjects interpret the "best" and "worst imaginable" tree as neither or both "happy" or "sad" then Darnell would have the scale discarded as being non-discriminatory or non-evaluative for the concept. Another finding by Darnell related to the polarity of the scales selected. A person who believes that the "best imaginable" tree is "quite large" might also believe that the "best imaginable" woman is quite small. In cases such as this the polarity of the scales would have to be reversed since a scale such as "large-small" could have either a positive or a negative meaning with different concepts. The semantic differential developed by Osgood and Suci in 1952 and modified by Darnell seems to provide a reliable index to attitude.

Robert S. Goyer of Ohio State linked congruity with the semantic differential when he said "with the exception of the semantic differential, I know of no standardized instrument

⁶¹ Darnell, p. 42.

to measure, indirectly or otherwise, dissonance."⁶² Goyer suggested even broader possibilities for the use of the semantic differential when he reasoned that

If a communicator's sincerity is a function of his degree of commitment to an idea or cause, and amount of dissonance is a function of degree of commitment, then a systematic measure of dissonance might be interpreted as a systematic measure of sincerity. Perhaps Osgood's semantic differential technique has some untried possibilities here."⁶³

If Goyer's opinion that the semantic differential can measure sincerity and commitment in terms of the cognitive dissonance principle is true, then valuable insight into a debater's attitude and performance may be achieved.

Justification for the Study

A review of the literature in speech related fields has indicated a disagreement over the values of two-sided debating. Most of the writers as well as the directors of debate seem to favor the practice, even though responsible and sincere authorities condemn debating against conviction. Studies have been conducted by Hay, Capel, Schug, and Welden in an attempt to discover the relationship between debating one or both sides of a debate proposition and changes in a debater's attitude. These studies provided conflicting conclusions. New principles and techniques have been developed since these studies were completed. Two of these developments are the principle of congruity and the use of the

⁶² "Cognitive Dissonance and Communication Theory," Central States Speech Journal, XV, no. 2, (May, 1964), p. 94.

⁶³ Goyer, p. 94.

semantic differential in measuring attitude. Perhaps the application of the semantic differential and the principle of congruity to the study of debate and attitude shift would help explain or resolve these conflicts in the literature.

The questions which warrant an answer in evaluating the effects of attitude on effectiveness in debate are:

1. Is there a relationship between the side of a debate proposition upheld and the attitude of a debater toward the proposition?
2. Is there a relationship between the side of a debate proposition upheld and effectiveness in debating the proposition?
3. Is there a relationship between successful debating and attitude shifts toward the proposition from the beginning to the end of a debate season?

II. HYPOTHESES

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the questions raised in the review of the literature in an attempt to provide a rationale for the theoretical hypotheses basic to this study.

The first of these questions is: Is there a relationship between the side of a debate proposition upheld and the attitude of a debater toward the proposition? A positive relationship can be said to exist if it is true that debaters' debate more on the side of the proposition in which they believe. The studies conducted by Schug, Capel, and Welden provide clear and strong evidence that debaters tend to debate the side consistent to their convictions. The most impressive of these studies was done by Schug who found that more than 75 per cent of the debaters studied debated on the side of the topic that they favored.⁶⁴

This conclusion was held by Wilson and Roosevelt before the turn of the century when they refused to debate against conviction. Murphy and Wallace strongly implied that if debaters' weren't "forced" to debate against conviction that they would choose to debate on the side in which they believe. When discussing the concept of tertiary sincerity, Brembeck

⁶⁴ Schug, pp. 15-16.

and Howell suggested that a speaker would "rationalize" his position in order "to live comfortably with himself."⁶⁵ It does not seem unreasonable to assume that debaters' would attempt to avoid as much as possible situations which are uncomfortable.

The standard debate practice in Kansas (where this study as conducted) requires that debaters debate both sides of the proposition. The most popular tournament procedure involves six rounds of debate with each team alternating from one side to the other, debating three times on each side of the question. Some tournaments have an odd number of debates, usually five, which requires a debater to debate more on one side of the topic than the other. Another practice which accounts for an uneven distribution of affirmative and negative debates is the four-speaker tournament in which each debater is required to debate exclusively on one side of the topic. The review of the literature implied that if given a choice, debaters prefer to debate on the side of the topic they favor. The presence of the four-speaker tournament and the five-round two-speaker tournament suggest that debaters who debate both sides of a question will not necessarily debate both sides an equal number of times.

The studies cited in the review of the literature covered students who debated one side of a topic for an entire debate season. The question which should be asked is what happens to debaters who debate both sides of the question?

⁶⁵ Brembeck and Howell, pp. 254-256.

Can any disproportion of debates engaged in during the season be accounted for by an examination of the attitude of the debater?

The first hypothesis is: Given that debaters debate both sides of a proposition, they engage in a greater number of debates on the side of a proposition they favor than on the side they oppose.

The second question which this study will attempt to answer is: Is there a relationship between the side of a debate proposition upheld and effectiveness in debating the proposition? A review of the literature revealed little theoretical concern with this question. Authorities such as Beuhler and Monroe contend that sincerity and conviction are essential to effective speaking; that without conviction a speech is bound to fail. Brembeck and Howell stated that inexperienced speakers (most high school debaters would probably fall into this class) could be successful only with primary sincerity; that only the most effective of speakers would have consistent success with secondary or tertiary sincerity. Brembeck and Howell define primary sincerity as unreserved belief in the proposition; secondary sincerity as believing that the policy advocated is socially desirable even though the speaker is personally opposed to the policy; and tertiary sincerity as sincerity based on the speaker's personal reward from the act of persuasion, regardless of his personal opinion of the policy advocated. Brembeck and Howell suggest that the boost in confidence a

speaker receives by being committed to what he says (having primary sincerity) may help him compensate for deficiencies in "rhetoric and delivery" which might plague his performance on the opposite side.⁶⁶

The second hypothesis is: Given that debaters debate both sides of a proposition, they win proportionally more debates on the side of a proposition they favor than on the side they oppose.

The third of these questions under investigation is: Is there a relationship between successful debating and attitude shifts toward the proposition from the beginning to the end of a debate season. The principle of congruity and the related theory of cognitive dissonance suggest an affirmative answer to this question. Congruity implies that the stronger the initial attitude, the less it is likely to change; and the weaker the initial attitude the more likely it is to change. Congruity also implies that the more successful a debater is in debating a given side of the topic, the more likely he is to change his attitude in the direction of the more successful side; and the less successful a debater is in debating a given side of a topic, the less likely he is to shift his attitude in the direction of the unsuccessful side. The degree of the attitude shift should be proportional to the relative intensities of his original attitude and his success in debating each side of the topic. The application of the congruity principle to a debater's original attitude

⁶⁶ Brembeck and Howell, pp. 254-257.

toward the topic and his relative effectiveness in debating the topic should predict both the direction and degree of the attitude shift.

The third hypothesis is: Given that debaters debate both sides of a proposition, their attitude at the close of the season will reflect the interaction of their initial attitude and their win-loss record.

III. DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Procedure

This study was conducted among high school debaters in Kansas who debated both sides of the 1963-64 national topic; Resolved: That the federal government should provide complete medical care for all citizens at public expense. One hundred and three students from four high schools and one junior high school participated in this study. The information obtained from these students was their pre-season attitude toward the topic, their post-season attitude toward the topic, and their win-loss record on both sides of the topic.

A semantic differential was used to identify the debaters' pre and post-season attitudes toward the topic debated. One hundred scales were obtained from the literature on health care programs and used to construct a semantic differential. This semantic differential was administered to 31 high school students to test the discriminatory values and polarity of the 100 scales using the "best-worst" technique designed by Darnell.⁶⁷ The "best-worst" technique required that the subjects locate the "best imaginable" and the "worst imaginable" example of a health care program for each of the 100 scales on the semantic differential. The sign test was used to identify scales which would indicate the polarity of

⁶⁷ Darnell, pp. 73-83.

the scales and the ability of the scale to discriminate between the "best imaginable" and "worst imaginable" health care program. Over half of the scales tested met the objective requirements for acceptability. The best 24 of these scales (a convenient page of scales) were selected for use as an attitude measure. The order in which the scales appeared was randomized and the 24 scales of paired adjectives were randomly reversed to prevent a set pattern in marking the scales. A semantic differential using these 24 scales was administered to debaters in seven Kansas high schools at the beginning and at the end of the debate season (see Appendix A). Included with the post-test mailed to each of these schools was a questionnaire asking for the total number of affirmative and negative debates and the win-loss record of each debater on each side of the proposition. Five of the seven high schools completed and returned the questionnaires.

Statistical Hypotheses and Methodology

The data obtained from the questionnaires were used to test the following statistical hypotheses:

- 1) The correlation between attitude scores and the proportion of debates on the side favored equals zero.
- 2) The correlation between attitude scores and the proportion of wins equals zero.
- 3) The correlation between post-season attitude scores and the congruity points is not significantly greater than either the correlation between the

post-season attitude scores and the pre-season attitude scores or the post-season attitude scores and the negative proportion.

The first statistical hypothesis was that no correlation exists between a debater's attitude score and the proportion of his debates on the affirmative and negative sides. It was convenient to convert the subjects markings on the pre-test to a mathematical proportion to test this hypothesis. Each of the seven scale intervals was assigned a number between one and seven for ease of computation. Assuming that the scale were "good-bad"; one was assigned the interval representing extremely good, two represented quite good, three represented slightly good, four represented the undecided category, five represented slightly bad, six represented quite bad and seven represented extremely bad. In other words, the numbers one through seven were assigned the scale intervals consecutively from the favorable adjective to the unfavorable adjective. The mean attitude score for each debater was computed. Since the other variables in this study were reported as proportions between zero and one, the mean attitude scores were translated to comparable scores by using the formula $\frac{X-1}{6}$.⁶⁸ The other variable needed to test the first hypothesis was the debate proportion (Dp). The debate proportion was acquired by dividing the number of

⁶⁸ If a debater's mean attitude score was 2.00 (moderately favorable to the proposition) his score would be calculated by subtracting one from two (X-1) and dividing by six, giving the debater an adjusted score of .17.

negative debates by the total number of debates.⁶⁹ The .00 to 1.00 debate proportion could be compared visually with the .00 to 1.00 index of attitude. It was convenient here and necessary to the test of the third hypothesis that attitude scores be in this form. Two separate definitions of "side favored" or attitude were available for correlation with the debate proportion. One was the pre-test score measuring the debaters' attitude at the beginning of the season, the other was the post-test score measuring the debaters' attitude at the close of the season. Since both scores were available it was decided to correlate both the pre-test and the post-test scores with the debate proportion to test the first hypothesis. All of the correlations used in this study were Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. The .05 level of confidence on the one-tailed test was set as the test for the statistical significance of the correlations.

The second statistical hypothesis was that no correlation exists between a debater's attitude and his affirmative-negative win-loss proportion. Three variables were needed to test the second hypothesis; the pre-test scores, the post-test scores, and the negative proportion (N_p). The pre and post-test scores had previously been used to test the first hypothesis. The negative proportion combines the win-loss record of a debater on the affirmative and negative sides of the question. To compute the negative proportion the total

⁶⁹ If a debater engaged in 10 affirmative and 20 negative debates his debate proportion would be 20 divided by 30, or .67.

number of negative wins and affirmative losses was divided by total number of debates.⁷⁰ This computation assumes that a negative win has approximately the same influence as an affirmative loss and vice versa. The pre and post-attitude scores could then be conveniently correlated with the negative proportion since a score of .00 on the attitude measure represented complete agreement with the proposition and a score of 1.00 represented complete disagreement with the proposition, while a negative proportion of .00 represented singular success on the affirmative side and a negative proportion of 1.00 represented singular success on the negative side of the proposition. A correlation was then computed between the pre-season attitude scores and the negative proportion as well as between the post-season attitude scores and the negative proportion to test the second hypothesis. The .05 level of confidence on a one-tailed test was again set as the test for statistical significance of the correlations.

The third hypothesis was that the correlation between post-season attitude scores and the congruity points is not significantly greater than the correlation between the pre-season attitude scores and the post-season attitude scores

⁷⁰ If a debater won 10 and lost 5 on the affirmative, and won 10 and lost 15 on the negative, his negative proportion would be 15 divided by 40, or .38. This procedure was used in translating the data into proportions in which .00 to .50 always represented proportions favorable to the affirmative side of the topic while .50 to 1.00 represented proportions favorable to the negative side. This procedure simplified the visual interpretation of the data and was convenient for the computation of correlation coefficients.

or between the correlation between the post-season attitude scores and the negative proportion. A congruity point (C) uses the pre-test score and the negative proportion to predict the post-test score. A congruity point, then, is the predicted post-test score. The formula $Y - \left(\frac{I_1}{I_1 I_2} D \right) = C$ was used to compute the congruity points.⁷¹ Given that the variables in the formula cited above are the pre-test score and the negative proportion; X equals the smaller of the two numbers, Y equals the larger number, I_1 equals the absolute difference of X and .50, I_2 equals the absolute difference between Y and .50, and D equals the absolute difference between X and Y.⁷² A congruity point was computed for each subject.

The second variable required to test the third hypothesis was the correlation coefficient between the pre-test scores and the post-test scores. This correlation also provided an index of attitude measure reliability and of the consistency of attitudes from the beginning to the end of the debate season. The third variable required to test the third hypothesis was the correlation between the post-season attitude scores and the negative proportion. This correlation had been computed to test the second hypothesis. A t test of the difference between two correlation coefficients for correlated samples was used to determine whether the correlation between

⁷¹ This formula was an adaptation of Osgood's congruity formula to a .00 to 1.00 point scale. (Osgood, pp. 204-207, 332-335.)

⁷² If a debater had a pre-test score of .25 and a negative proportion of .85 his congruity point would be .65. If the debater had a pre-test score of .25 and a negative proportion of .45 his congruity point would be .28.

post season attitude scores and the congruity points was significantly greater than the correlation between either of the two sets of variables. The .05 level of confidence on a one-tailed test was set as the test for statistical significance of the correlations.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of the Data

The data used in this study were obtained by correlating the pre and post-season attitude scores with the affirmative-negative debate proportions, the affirmative-negative win-loss proportions, and the congruity points. All five variables were translated into proportions between .00 and 1.00 in which all proportions between .00 and .50 represented relationships favorable to the affirmative side of the topic and proportions between .50 and 1.00 represented relationships favorable to the negative side of the topic. This information was acquired from an attitude schedule administered at the beginning of the season in September, 1963, and at the close of the season in January, 1964, and from a questionnaire that asked for the total number of affirmative and negative debates and win-loss record on each side of the proposition of each debater.

Statistical Analysis

The first statistical hypothesis was: The correlation between attitude and the proportion of debates on the side favored equals zero. Two different measures of attitude were afforded; the pre-test scores and the post-test scores. The correlation coefficient between the pre-test scores and the debate proportion (side favored) was .32 ($p < .05$).⁷³ The

correlation coefficient between the post-test scores and the debate proportion was .23 ($p < .05$). Since the correlation between attitude and the proportion of debates on the side favored differed significantly from zero, the first null hypothesis was rejected.

The second statistical hypothesis was: The correlation between attitude and proportion of wins equals zero. The correlation coefficient between the pre-test scores and the negative proportion of wins was $-.20$ ($p > .05$). The correlation coefficient between the post-test scores and the proportion of wins on the side favored was $.07$ ($p > .05$). Since the correlations between attitude and the proportion of wins did not differ significantly from zero, the second null hypothesis was not rejected.

The third statistical hypothesis was: The correlation between post-season attitude scores and the congruity points is not significantly greater than either the correlation between the post-season attitude scores and the pre-season attitude scores or the post-season attitude scores and the negative proportion. Since the pre-season attitude scores would be expected to correlate to some extent with the post-season attitude scores, and since the negative proportion is hypothesized to correlate with the post-season attitude scores, any combination of the pre-season attitude scores and the

⁷³ Correlations necessary for the .05 level of confidence (one-tailed test) is .16.

negative proportion into a congruity point should result in a correlation coefficient between the congruity points and the post-season attitude scores significantly greater than either of the other two correlation coefficients.

The correlation coefficient between the post-season attitude scores and the congruity points was .50. The correlation coefficient between the pre-season attitude scores and the post-season attitude scores was .46. Since this correlation coefficient was greater than the .07 obtained between the post-season attitude scores and the negative proportion it was used as the standard to test the significance of the correlation coefficient between post-season attitude scores and the congruity points. A t test of the difference between the correlation coefficients for correlated samples was computed for $r = .46$ and $r = .50$. Since the obtained t of .63 was not significant, the third null hypothesis was not rejected.

Summary

The statistical analysis of the data reported in this chapter seem to indicate the following:

1. The debaters studied tended to engage in a slightly greater proportion of debates on the side of the topic consistent with their convictions than on the side opposite their convictions.
2. The debaters studied did not win a greater proportion of debates on the side consistent with their convictions than on the side opposite their convictions.

3. The congruity prediction did not seem to account for the interaction of wins and losses with the pre-season attitude as a determinant of post-season attitude.

Discussion

The statistical analysis of the data in this study supported the first theoretic hypothesis and failed to support the second and third theoretic hypotheses.

Small but significant correlations were found to exist between the debate proportion and the pre-season and post-season attitude scores. The support for this hypothesis was not as impressive as those discovered by Capel, Schug, and Welden. Since the studies conducted by Capel, Schug, and Welden primarily studied debaters who debated only one side of the topic while this study analysed debaters who were required to debate both sides of the topic, the small, yet positive, correlation between side favored and the proportion of debates on each side of the topic would seem to be in keeping with the nature of the situation in Kansas.

The standard practice in Kansas tournaments requires that debaters alternate sides in successive rounds of debate. This practice implies that a Kansas debater would normally debate both sides of the topic an equal number of times. The situation which accounts for the uneven distribution of affirmative and negative debates is the presence of a few five-round two-speaker tournaments and a few four-speaker tournaments. Four-speaker tournaments and five-round

two-speaker tournaments allow the Kansas debater some freedom of choice in the side of the topic he would prefer to debate. The greater probability of freedom of choice afforded by debating only one side of the topic might account for the somewhat stronger relationship between attitude and proportion of affirmative-negative debates found by Capel, Schug, and Welden.

The analysis of the data did not provide support for the second hypothesis. The correlations between attitude and relative success in debating the affirmative and negative sides of the topic were not statistically significant. Two assumptions that were made in providing the rationale for the second hypothesis might be questioned. One of these assumptions was that debaters would be more effective if they were motivated by primary sincerity than they would be if motivated by secondary or tertiary sincerity. Brembeck and Howell stated that inexperienced speakers could be successful only with primary sincerity but that an audience could not distinguish between primary and tertiary sincerity if the speaker were experienced and effective.⁷⁴ The second hypothesis may be based on an underestimation of the persuasive abilities of high school debaters. The other assumption was that debaters allow their attitudes to influence their treatment of the debate topic. This assumption suggests that debaters will exercise greater effort to defend positions consistent with their attitudes than those positions not consistent with

⁷⁴ Brembeck and Howell, p. 257.

their attitudes. This assumption appears to be related to the question of open and closed-mindedness in communication. Since the analysis of the data failed to demonstrate that debaters win more debates on the side consistent with their attitudes, debaters may be keeping their attitude toward the topic apart from their ability and willingness to debate both sides of the topic as effectively as they can. This conclusion would seem to be consistent with the argument of writers such as Thompson, Cripe, and Auer that two-sided debating encourages open-mindedness and objectivity.

An assumption was made in the test of the second hypothesis which might also be questioned. The assumption was that wins and losses are of equal intensity and are statistically similar concepts. This assumption equates reward (winning on the side favored) and punishment (losing on the side not-favored). Eisenson, Auer, and Irwin agreed that "At an intuitive level, it would seem that reward and punishment are essential equals and opposites.", but went on to cite studies which indicated that " . . . reward is more effective than punishment as motivation for learning."⁷⁵

The negative proportion used to test the second hypothesis assumed that wins on one side of a debate and losses on the other side were equal since negative wins and affirmative losses were divided by the total number of wins and losses to compute the negative proportion. If wins and losses are

⁷⁵ Jon Eisenson, J. Jeffery Auer, and John V. Irwin, The Psychology of Communication, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963), p. 99.

not of equal intensity, then the negative proportion may not be an accurate index of relative success in debating both sides of the topic.

The analysis of the data did not provide support for the third hypothesis. The correlation coefficient between the post-season attitude scores and the congruity points was not significantly greater than the correlation coefficient between the pre-season attitude scores and the post-season attitude scores. Since the congruity points use the intensities of the pre-season attitude scores and the negative proportion to predict the post-season attitude scores and since the negative proportion was found to have no significant intensity relative to the pre-season attitude scores, then the congruity prediction of the post-season attitude scores would be influenced almost entirely by the pre-season attitude scores.

Suggestions for Further Study

Since previous studies reporting that debaters tend to debate more frequently on the side of the proposition consistent with their convictions analysed primarily debaters who debated only one side of the topic; and since one-sided debaters in previous studies demonstrated a strong tendency to debate the side favored, while the two-sided debaters in this study demonstrated some exercise of the freedom of choice that was available, a study designed to test the difference between one and two-sided debaters' desire to debate on the side favored might prove fruitful.

The rationale provided by such authorities as Buehler and Monroe that speakers should be more effective in advocating positions consistent with their convictions appeared too strong to reject too lightly. Since questions were raised concerning the measurement of success in debating, a study designed to again test the hypothesis that debaters' win a greater proportion of debates on the side favored might be justified.

The theories of cognitive dissonance and congruity implied strongly that the rewards and punishment which a communicator received from his communication would modify initial attitudes in a predictable manner. A follow up study designed to test the possible interaction of pre-season attitude and the relative reward and punishment received from debating one or both sides of a debate proposition as a method of predicting the degree and direction of attitude shift might also be both justified and worthwhile.

APPENDIX A

PRE AND POST-SEASON ATTITUDE MEASURE

Name _____ School _____ Sex: M ___ F ___

You will notice that at the top of the following page is a topic which is underlined. Below the topic appears a number of scales, each one bounded by two words. What you are asked to do is to look at the topic, and check each of the following scales in the place which most clearly resembles your feelings about the topic.

On the following page are scales with adjectives at each end that look like this:

left _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ right

The intervals on these scales may be interpreted as extremely left, quite left, slightly left, neither or both, slightly right, quite right, and extremely right. Of course you are to substitute whatever words occur at the left and right ends of the scales.

Here is an example: Suppose the topic at the top of the page were:

Federal Aid to Education

If the scale below were:

Honest _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Dishonest

And if you felt that the subject of the topic was extremely honest, you would check like this:

Honest X : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ Dishonest

If you felt that the scale didn't apply to the topic at the top of the page at all, you would check:

Honest _____ : _____ : _____ : X : _____ : _____ : _____ Dishonest

And if you felt extremely negative toward the topic, you would check like this:

Honest _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : X Dishonest

Work quickly! It is your first reaction to the topic which is usually the best reaction. Don't eliminate any scales. Be sure to check after you have rated the topic to make sure that you haven't missed any scales.

Medical Care for all Citizens
at Public Expense

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------|
| harmful | : | : | : | : | : | : | helpful |
| flexible | : | : | : | : | : | : | inflexible |
| invalid | : | : | : | : | : | : | valid |
| constitutional | : | : | : | : | : | : | unconstitutional |
| effective | : | : | : | : | : | : | ineffective |
| undesireable | : | : | : | : | : | : | desireable |
| strong | : | : | : | : | : | : | weak |
| humane | : | : | : | : | : | : | inhumane |
| wise | : | : | : | : | : | : | unwise |
| workable | : | : | : | : | : | : | unworkable |
| impractical | : | : | : | : | : | : | practical |
| admirable | : | : | : | : | : | : | despicable |
| bad | : | : | : | : | : | : | good |
| dictatorial | : | : | : | : | : | : | democratic |
| orderly | : | : | : | : | : | : | chaotic |
| just | : | : | : | : | : | : | unjust |
| corrective | : | : | : | : | : | : | corruptive |
| insufficient | : | : | : | : | : | : | sufficient |
| unfair | : | : | : | : | : | : | fair |
| worthless | : | : | : | : | : | : | valuable |
| beneficial | : | : | : | : | : | : | harmful |
| sound | : | : | : | : | : | : | unsound |
| unstable | : | : | : | : | : | : | stable |
| sensible | : | : | : | : | : | : | insensible |

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AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF CERTAIN RELATIONSHIPS
BETWEEN DEBATERS' ATTITUDES
AND WIN-LOSS RECORDS

by

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ABSTRACT

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF CERTAIN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DEBATERS' ATTITUDES AND WIN-LOSS RECORDS

by Vernon LeRay Barnes

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of a debater's attitude towards a debate topic on his effectiveness in debating the topic and the effects of his debating of that topic on his attitudes toward the topic.

The hypotheses of this study were:

1. Given that debaters debate both sides of a proposition, they engage in a greater number of debates on the side of a proposition they favor than on the side they oppose.
2. Given that debaters debate both sides of a proposition, they win proportionally more debates on the side of a proposition they favor than on the side they oppose.
3. Given that debaters debate both sides of a proposition, their attitude at the close of the season will reflect the interaction of their initial attitude and their win-loss record.

A semantic differential was used to index the debaters' pre and post-season attitudes. The pre and post-season attitude scores were correlated with the proportion of affirmative-negative debates and with the proportion of affirmative-negative wins and losses to test the first two hypotheses. The pre-season attitude scores were combined

with the debaters' win-loss proportions to predict the post-season attitude scores. The post-season attitude scores were compared with the predicted post-season attitude scores to test the third hypothesis.

A statistical analysis of the data supported the first hypothesis and did not support the second and third hypotheses.